

Guilty Plea Halts

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By Peter Osnos

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The three-day murder trial of John C. McClure, a one-time member of the Pagans motorcycle gang, came to an abrupt end yesterday when McClure pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

McClure, 30, was accused of shooting to death Thomas Williams, a Wilson High School senior, in the parking lot of a Georgetown drugstore during the early hours of June 3, 1968.

The sudden switch to a guilty plea came at the end of a fast-paced morning in which U.S. District Court Judge Leonard P. Walsh first declared a mistrial and then seemed ready to change his mind.

At the center of the dispute were newspaper accounts of a contempt hearing Tuesday against one of McClure's friends who allegedly made a threatening remark in the courtroom about a government witness.

John Treanor, McClure's lawyer, argued that despite

Walsh's warning to the jury not to read anything connected with the trial, "No juror is going to stand up and admit he deliberately disobeyed your honor's instructions."

McClure also pleaded with the judge saying, "I had hoped for a real trial, a search for the truth of the matter . . . was I guilty of a wrong act or was I protecting myself? I frankly have not been able to decide this . . ."

"I am highly upset that a threat was implied to begin

Trial in Slaying

with. I am even more upset by this publicity." He was referring to a story on page C2 of yesterday's Washington Post.

The story was headlined, "Threat Laid to Friend of Murder Suspect." It dealt largely with the contempt proceedings, but also described testimony at the murder trial.

After listening to Treanor and McClure, Judge Walsh said, "The court will grant (the defense motion for a mistrial)." He did so without questioning the jurors on

whether they had seen the newspaper articles.

Prosecutor Sandor Frankel asked the judge if he could have an hour to prepare arguments against the motion for a mistrial.

Although he had already granted the motion for a mistrial, Walsh agreed to let Frankel have the hour to prepare arguments. It was during that hour that McClure decided to plead guilty to manslaughter after conferring with his lawyer.

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Plea of Guilty Ends 'Pagan' Slaying Trial

TRIAL, From B1

McClure, whose almost frail appearance during the trial belied his Pagan nickname of "Big John," faces a maximum prison sentence of 35 years. In addition to manslaughter, he pleaded guilty to assault with intent to kill and carrying a deadly weapon.

Meanwhile, Earl Swicegood, a men's hair stylist accused of making a threat against a witness in remarks to a companion, was found guilty of contempt by Walsh and given a 10-day suspended jail sentence.

A friend of Williams, the slain youth, claimed he overheard Swicegood saying of a witness then on the stand, "I'm going to blow that (obscenity's) head away."

Swicegood admitted use of the profanity but denied making a threat. His court-appointed lawyer, John Perazich, said there was not "a scintilla" of evidence that Swicegood had obstructed the trial. Perazich said he would appeal.

He said Frankel appeared to be fearful about "intimidation or threats" outside the courtroom against prosecution witnesses, but he added that the contempt proceeding had nothing to do with those threats.

Yesterday's procedural wrangling overshadowed the testimony that had come in the trial's first two days from friends of Williams. The witnesses said the shooting followed a brief encounter on Wisconsin Avenue with a group, frequently described as "hippies" in testimony.

Williams' parents and friends sat silently throughout yesterday's developments. At least one of the youths was on the verge of tears.